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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
The Farm Security Administration
and
The Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Cooperating

SURVEY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR CONDITIONS IN KARNES COUNTY, TEXAS

Tom Vasey, Farm Security Administration
and
Josiah C. Folsom, Bureau of Agricultural Economics

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This publication is one of a series of 11 with similar titles by Tom Vasey and Josiah C. Folsom. The reports are based on surveys made in the late summer and early autumn of 1936 of the economic and social conditions of adult agricultural laborers. The counties studied represent various types of farming in different parts of the United States, as follows:

<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Type of Farming</u>
California	Placer	Fruit
Colorado	Archuleta	Stock-ranch
Illinois	Livingston	Corn
Iowa	Hamilton	Corn-Hog
Kansas	Pawnee	Winter wheat
Kentucky	Todd	Tobacco
Louisiana	Concordia Parish	Cotton (eastern)
Minnesota	Lac qui Parle	Small grain
Pennsylvania	Wayne	Dairy
Tennessee	Fentress	Self-sufficing
Texas	Karnes	Cotton (western)

SURVEY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR CONDITIONS IN KARNES COUNTY, TEXAS

By Tom Vasey, Farm Security Administration
and

Josiah C. Folsom, Bureau of Agricultural Economics

During the summer and fall of 1936 the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Social Research Section of the Farm Security Administration /1 made studies of wages and working conditions affecting farm laborers in 11 selected counties in as many States. The funds necessary for this research were provided by the Works Progress Administration. Karnes County, Texas, where much of the harvest labor is done by hand, was chosen as one of those to be surveyed

Enumerators were engaged to canvass the hired farm laborers and their operator-employers, and to fill out schedules with information drawn from each group. The schedule designed for use among the laborers was rather complete. In addition to general characteristics such as age, education, etc., it covered incomes for the previous year, job descriptions, wage rates, work histories for the preceding 12 months, and participation in community affairs. The farm operators were questioned concerning wage rates, fluctuations in number of employees, and methods of obtaining labor. /2

The enumerators were directed to use the limited time available for reaching as nearly as possible all the farms in the county hiring labor, except those that are not primarily dependent on agriculture as a source of income. The exceptions included country estates, livestock dealers, institutions, feed lots, boarding and lodging places, and unclassified farms. As to the laborers, the enumerators were instructed to interview "only those hired to do the work of adults at adult wages." This eliminated all unpaid family labor and any child labor receiving wage rates below those of adults. "Hired labor" or "employees," as the terms are used in this study, refer to persons who work for wages and are dependent on wages paid by the farm operator. The amount of these wages does not depend on the income derived from livestock or crops.

Karnes County, Texas, in the central part of southeastern Texas, is devoted chiefly to cotton culture, with corn as its second most important crop. The greatest demands for labor come in April and August,

/1 The Resettlement Administration, prior to September 1, 1937.

/2 The work was directed by representatives of the Department of Agriculture. The officials of the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College and of the Experiment Station cooperated in obtaining enumerators, D. Paul Dansby and W. B. Hearne of Bryan, and in advice concerning the study. Mr. J. M. Ruiz of Kenedy served as interpreter.

the months for chopping and picking cotton. Although the peak demand had passed at the time this survey was conducted, September 7 to October 10, cotton picking was still in progress. As it was also corn-harvesting season, many of the laborers who were interviewed had been hired to pull corn. That the greatest demand for cotton labor had passed was evident from the fact that the 98 operators interviewed reported nearly four times as many employees in August as in the 2 months of the survey. In early September many automobiles loaded with household equipment were on the roads, obviously following the cotton picking northward. Thus the group interviewed probably represents a more stable section of the harvest labor of the county than would have been the case if the survey had been conducted a few weeks earlier.

Ninety-eight farms employing 475 laborers were visited. This report presents data gathered from 325 of these laborers and their employers.

General Characteristics

Mexicans, who comprised the predominant farm labor group in Karnes County, contributed 85 percent of the schedules. The remaining 15 percent were about equally divided between the other whites and Negroes.

The age and education of these agricultural workers is shown in Table 1. The age most frequently reported was between 30 and 39 years. Nearly two-fifths of the Mexicans were 40 years of age and over. The average age of the other whites was 6 years less than that of the Mexicans, and that of the Negroes was 3 years more.

The Mexican laborers in Karnes County have received only meager educational training. Only 5 percent of them had gone beyond the fourth grade as contrasted with 90 percent of the other whites. More than one-third of the Mexicans had never attended school, and 36 percent of those with no education were American-born. All but 2 of the Negroes had had some schooling but never very much. In general, the younger workers had more education than the older ones; all those less than 20 years old had attended school, whereas only 6 of the 39 workers over 50 years of age had had any schooling at all.

As would be expected from the age grouping, a large proportion of the Mexicans were or had been married, though several of the older ones were still single. All the other whites and Negroes over 30 were married (Table 2).

Practically all of those who were married reported one or more dependents, in most instances either their wives or children. Relatively large families among the Mexicans were prevalent; 30 percent had 4 or 5 dependents each and one family of 11 members was reported. The maximum number in any family as reported by the other whites was 7, and the few Negro families varied in size from 2 to 11 persons (Table 3).

Table 1.- Age and education of 325 agricultural laborers,
by race, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Age	Grades completed											
	Total laborers			None			1 - 2			3 - 4		
	Mexi- can	Other: white	Mexi- can	Other: white	Mexi- can	Other: white	Mexi- can	Other: white	Mexi- can	Other: white	Mexi- can	Other: white
15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	3	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	2
17	6	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	2	1
18	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-
19	5	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-
20 - 29	71	2	7	25	-	-	27	1	18	-	1	7
30 - 39	85	6	2	16	1	-	40	2	26	2	3	2
40 - 49	75	11	6	27	1	-	27	5	15	4	6	5
50 - 59	35	-	-	31	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-
60 - 69	3	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Totals	285	21	19	101	2	-	102	9	68	7	14	17

Table 2.- Marital status by age and race of 325 agricultural laborers, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Marital status	Age						
	: Total :	laborers:	15-19:	20-29:	30-39:	40-49:	50-59: 60-69
Unmarried:							
Mexican	69	16	39	10	2	2	-
Other white	8	4	4	-	-	-	-
Negro	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Married:							
Mexican	199	-	27	74	67	28	3
Other white	11	-	3	2	6	-	-
Negro	20	-	2	6	11	-	1
Widowed, divorced, or separated:							
Mexican	17	-	5	1	6	5	-
Other white	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Negro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals							
Mexican	285	16	71	85	75	35	3
Other white	19	4	7	2	6	-	-
Negro	21	1	2	6	11	-	1

Table 3.- Dependents of agricultural laborers, by race, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Number of dependents	Total laborers		Mexican		Other white		Negro
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
0	83	25.6	75	26.2	7		1
1	21	6.5	16	5.6	2		3
2	35	10.8	29	10.2	3		3
3	48	14.8	40	14.0	4		4
4	48	14.8	43	15.1	1		4
5	46	14.2	43	15.1	-		3
6	30	9.3	28	9.8	1		1
7	6	1.9	5	1.8	-		1
8	2	.6	2	.7	-		-
9	4	1.2	3	1.1	-		1
10	1	.3	1	.4	-		-
Totals	324	100.0	285	100.0	18		21

In contrast to the known mobility of much of the harvest labor in Texas, this group was rather stationary. With the exception of one white worker (not a Mexican), all of those interviewed were born either in Texas or in Mexico. Only 2 reported having left the State since 1930 to look for work. Moreover, the fact that practically none of the workers reported jobs outside the county during the previous 12 months indicates that the stability of the group was above the average for this cotton area (Table 4).

Table 4.- Nativity by race of 325 farm laborers,
Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

State or country	Total laborers:		Mexican		Other whites :		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Texas	222 <u>/1</u>	68.3	183	64.2	18 <u>/1</u>	94.7	21	100.0
Mexico	101	31.1	101	35.4	-	-	-	-
Alabama	1	.3	-	-	1	5.3	-	-
Not reported	1	.3	1	.4	-	-	-	-
Totals	325	100.0	285	100.0	19	100.0	21	100.0

/1 Includes 1 female; all others male.

The dates when those Mexicans who were born in Mexico entered Karnes County are scattered from 1910 to the time of the survey but three-eighths came in 1930 or later. Some of those who have entered recently are doubtless Mexicans who had been in Texas previously, since the schedule specified "the last date of entry." Nevertheless, the number of departures from Texas since 1930 indicated very little movement across State or National borders.

Two-fifths of the men were general farm laborers, doing a variety of work on the farm. One-third were employed for harvest work only, while the remainder reported doing machine work, hauling, or other miscellaneous tasks. The Negroes and Mexicans were limited almost entirely to harvest work or general labor; the percentage operating farm machinery was greatest among the other whites.

Tenure Experience

Sharecropping was reported by three-fifths of the workers (Table 5). No other type of experience in farm operation was encountered, except in the case of 1 Mexican who had been a tenant. The prevalence of sharecroppers as a source of wage labor is indicated by the fact that 99 of

the Mexicans working for wages were croppers at the same time. In addition there were 42 who had quit sharecropping within the previous 12 months. Together, these two groups constituted one-half of the Mexicans interviewed. The number of times that these and others had alternated between sharecropping and working for wages is not known. General discouragement, low prices, or crop failure were reported most frequently as the reasons for giving up sharecropping the last time, and these might easily have been the causes for quitting on previous occasions (Table 6).

Table 5.- Previous farm operation experience of 325 agricultural laborers, by race, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Experience	:Total laborers:		Mexican		: Other white		: Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None	124	38.2	108	37.9	10	53	6	29
Sharecropper	200	61.5	176	61.8	9	47	15	71
Cropper and tenant	1	.3	1	.3	-	-	-	-
Totals	325	100.0	285	100.0	19	100	21	100

Table 6.- Reasons for termination /1 of sharecropping given by 75 Mexican agricultural laborers, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Reason	: Number	: Percent
No profits, not able to make a living	20	27
Try something else, better job	15	20
Crop failure	12	16
Season ended, work finished	11	15
Moved	5	7
Could not find a place	4	5
Drought	4	5
Miscellaneous	4	5
Total	75	100

/1 Ninety-nine other sharecroppers were found working for cash wages.

Income

Total earnings for the 12 months preceding the survey ranged from mere maintenance to \$540. The incomes reported in Table 7 include earn-

Table 7.- Total income, September 1935 - August 1936, of
322 agricultural workers, Karnes County, Texas

Total income	Number	Percent	Agricultural earnings				Nonagricultural earnings				Relief			
			By laborers		By dependents		By laborers		By dependents		Work		Direct	
			Average	Number	Average	Number	Average	Number	Average	Number	Average	Number	Average	Number
\$ 0 - 49														
Total	22	6.8	\$28.09	-	-	-	1	\$15.00	-	-	-	-	1	\$24.00
Mexican	19		28.05	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	24.00
Other white	1		35.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Negro	1		25.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
50 - 99														
Total	43	13.4	67.62	1	\$10.00	5	45.00	1	\$24.00	1	\$21.00	3	24.67	
Mexican	38		67.84	1	10.00	5	45.00	1	24.00	1	21.00	3	24.67	
Other white	4		63.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	1		75.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
100 - 149														
Total	47	14.6	106.53	10	19.50	6	40.00	3	10.00	1	100.00	1	40.00	
Mexican	41		109.20	8	19.38	4	42.50	1	10.00	1	100.00	1	40.00	
Other white	1		50.00	-	-	1	50.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	5		96.00	2	20.00	1	20.00	2	10.00	-	-	-	-	
150 - 199														
Total	112	34.8	162.68	22	24.77	5	70.00	9	22.56	1	72.00	1	30.00	
Mexican	103		161.90	21	25.00	5	70.00	9	22.56	1	72.00	1	30.00	
Other white	6		174.17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	3		170.00	1	20.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
200 - 249														
Total	52	16.1	195.48	27	31.59	4	85.50	7	18.57	-	-	-	-	
Mexican	48		192.60	27	31.59	4	85.50	7	18.57	-	-	-	-	
Other white	1		240.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	3		226.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
250 - 299														
Total	19	5.9	195.00	15	45.67	3	121.67	5	41.40	1	63.00	-	-	
Mexican	15		185.00	11	55.00	3	121.67	5	41.40	1	63.00	-	-	
Other white	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	4		240.00	4	20.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
300 - 349														
Total	13	4.0	213.08	8	92.50	2	125.00	3	58.33	-	-	-	-	
Mexican	10		207.00	6	85.83	2	125.00	3	58.33	-	-	-	-	
Other white	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	3		233.33	2	112.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
350 - 399														
Total	7	2.2	287.86	3	141.67	-	-	2	38.50	-	-	1	15.00	
Mexican	5		259.00	3	141.67	-	-	2	38.50	-	-	1	15.00	
Other white	2		360.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
400 - 449														
Total	1	0.3	180.00	1	260.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Mexican	1		180.00	1	260.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other white	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
450 and over														
Total	6	1.9	404.17	2	200.00	1	75.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Mexican	4		361.25	1	340.00	1	75.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other white	1		480.00	1	60.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	1		500.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Totals and averages	322	100.0	119.36	89	46.21	27	68.96	30	28.20	4	64.00	7	26.14	
Mexican	284	100.0	115.46	79	46.68	24	74.04	28	29.50	4	64.00	7	26.14	
Other white	16	100.0	176.56	1	60.00	1	50.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Negro	21	100.0	187.14	9	40.56	1	20.00	2	10.00	-	-	-	-	

/1 "Number" in each instance refers to the number of laborers, not to the number of dependents.

/2 Include one whose race was not reported.

/3 As high as \$540.

ings of the workers and all members of their families in agricultural and nonagricultural employment.

One-third of the workers interviewed reported amounts ranging from \$150 to \$199 for the year. Though the average income for all workers was \$171, there were pronounced racial differences: \$168 for the 284 Mexicans, \$183 for the 16 other whites, and \$206 for the 21 Negroes. The incomes of most of the Mexicans were about the same, but in the few reports from other whites and Negroes there was considerable variation.

Agricultural wages of the worker himself constituted the most important single item of income, but there was a tendency for these to become less important as total earnings increased. In general, the higher the family's income, the larger was the share added by nonagricultural employment or by the work of other family members. Racial differences are again noticeable in the share earned by the laborer in agricultural employment: 86 percent by the Mexicans, 96 percent by the other whites, and 91 percent by the Negroes.

To supplement their meager incomes one-fourth of the Mexicans depended upon the earnings of their wives and children who added 8 percent by agricultural, and 2 percent by nonagricultural, wages. The wives and children of the other whites contributed comparatively little - only 2 percent - and this amount was earned solely in agriculture. Among the dependents of Negroes, percentages and types of labor existed that were almost identical with those among the Mexicans.

Although the nonagricultural income of the laborers accounted for very little of the total reported for the group, these earnings were important to a few individuals. The average income of the 284 Mexican families was \$168, but 24 of the individual workers averaged \$74.04 in nonfarm work.

Relief money added very little to the incomes of these people as a group since there were only 11 families who received either direct or work relief during the year.

Days Worked

Very few of those interviewed reported long periods of continuous employment or a high total number of days for all jobs held. A great many were sharecroppers, who were largely kept busy on their own crops. Of the Mexicans 115, or 41 percent, had less than 30 days of wage labor; only 24 had full-time or approximately full-time jobs. The majority were employed solely in agriculture, only 21 reporting mixed employment (Table 8). This small number devoted very little more of their time to farm than to nonfarm work. Similar data for the other whites and for the Negroes are shown in Table 9.

Table 8.- Days worked in agriculture and in mixed employment
by 278 Mexican farm laborers, Karnes County, Texas

Days worked	: Agriculture :		Mixed employment	
	Number	Number	Average in agriculture	Average in nonagriculture
0- 29	115	-	-	-
30- 59	24	7	19	28
60- 89	8	3	33	40
90-119	10	3	46	56
120-149	13	2	63	65
150-179	14	2	51	120
180-209	24	1	72	108
210-239	5	1	199	15
240-269	22	-	-	-
270-312	22	2	198	94
Totals	257	21	60	55

Table 9.- Days worked in agriculture and in mixed employment by 19 other
white and 21 Negro farm laborers, Karnes County, Texas

Days worked	: Agricultural :		Mixed employment					
	: Other :		Other white		Negro			
	: white : Negro :		Average in -		Average in -			
	Number	Number	ber	culture	Nonagri- culture	ber	Agri- culture	Nonagri- culture
0- 29	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
30- 59	2	1	1	22	20	-	-	-
60- 89	1	-	1	12	48	1	40	30
90-119	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
120-149	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
150-179	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
180-209	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
210-239	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
240-269	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
270-312	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	17	20	2	17	34	1	40	30

Assets

This group of laborers had very few assets. About one-third owned a pig or two and some chickens; only a small proportion reported cattle or horses. However, half of the group owned automobiles of some kind.

Life insurance and bank accounts were reported infrequently. Twenty-five, or 9 percent, of the Mexicans carried life insurance policies with an average face value of \$619. Fifty-eight percent of the other whites and nearly as many of the Negroes carried insurance, averaging \$955 and \$200 respectively. Bank accounts were listed by 3 workers, and only 1 owned any real estate.

Wage Rates

Wage rates were obtained from both the farm operators and the laborers. The worker reported the amount paid for his particular job; the operator gave rates for the different categories in which he might be hiring help, averaging the amounts where more than one employee was hired on the same basis. The operators were also asked to report piece-work rates for any time in 1936.

Sixty workers were picking cotton on a piece-work basis. The others were paid on a time basis, 72 by the day, 98 by the week, and 88 by the month. Those who were pulling corn, another important harvest job in Karnes County, were being paid on time rates. Many others who were being paid thus were hired for hauling or other work that was closely related to harvesting. Others were more permanent laborers, working for longer than just the harvest season.

The length of time an employee had been on the same job influenced the basis of pay. Short-time employees whose jobs usually lasted 2 or 3 months were paid by the piece, day, or week, whereas those who were hired for 9 or 10 months or permanently were paid monthly. The average length of job was 1 month for those on piece-work, 1.8 months for those paid by the day, 2.3 months for those paid by the week, and 14 months for those paid by the month.

Relatively close agreement was found between the wage rates reported by operators and laborers. Average rates per day, without regard to perquisites, were \$1.12 according to the data given by the laborers and \$1.09 according to the operators. The two groups reported \$17.17 and \$16.47 respectively as average monthly wages.

Averages, however, do not indicate the marked degree of recurrence of specific rates. Of those workers receiving daily wages, a small percentage earned 75 cents but practically all the others, 82 percent of the total, received either \$1 or \$1.25. Similar concentrations were found in weekly and monthly rates of pay.

Table 10.- Time wage rates of Mexican agricultural laborers, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Wage rates	Laborers' reports				Operators' reports			
	Total	Without board	With board	With house	Total	Without board	With board	With house
Per day:								
\$.75	10	4	1	5	7	7	-	<u>/1</u>
1.00	32	-	17	15	33	30	3	
1.15	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	
1.25	27	11	-	16	29	28	1	
1.50	1	-	-	1	1	1	-	
4.50	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	
Totals	72	16	18	38	70	66	4	
Averages	\$1.12	\$1.12	\$.99	\$1.18	\$1.09	\$1.09	\$1.06	
Per week:								
\$ 1.00	1	-	-	1	<u>/1</u>			
3.75	6	-	2	4				
4.12	1	-	-	1				
4.50	4	1	-	3				
5.00	8	1	-	7				
6.00	31	9	-	22				
6.25	19	3	-	16				
7.50	27	5	-	22				
9.00	1	-	-	1				
Totals	98	19	2	77				
Averages	\$6.14	\$6.30	\$3.75	\$6.16				
Per month:								
\$14.00	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
15.00	58	8	1	49	47	4	-	43
17.00	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
18.00	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-
20.00	22	-	-	22	9	-	-	9
22.00	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
25.00	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
30.00	3	-	-	3	2	-	-	2
40.00	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Totals	88	9	1	78	60	4	1	55
Averages	\$17.17	\$14.89	\$15.00	\$17.46	\$16.47	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$16.55

/1 Rates in these categories were not requested of the operators.

Most operators reported 75 cents per hundredweight for picking cotton, with average daily earnings of \$1.35 (Table 11). The laborers emphasized both 75 cents and 80 cents with average daily earnings of \$1.25 and \$1.42. Generally, a higher piece-work rate resulted in higher average daily earnings, though this was not true in all instances. Only two cases of families being paid as a unit were found, though 28 operators reported having hired laborers on that basis at some time during the year. The effective working force in a family unit is rather difficult to determine. All members do not work all the time and each contributes to the unit a different proportion of an adult's earning power. The largest working units reported by the laborers were two families of 5 workers each, earning an average of \$1 a day at 75 cents per hundredweight, and one family of 6 that had previously earned \$4.00 a day at the same rate. Operators generally reported 3 and 4 workers to the family, but 2 of them listed 5, and 1 employer cited 6 workers in one family.

Table 11.— Piece-work rates, picking cotton, /1 Karnes County, Texas

Per hundred- weight	Class of worker	Operators' reports:			Laborers' reports		
		1936			1936		1935
		Number:	Average daily earnings		Number:	Average daily earnings	Number:
\$.40	Single	-	-	1 /2	\$.40	-	-
.50	Single	2	\$1.00	6 /2	1.09	-	-
.60	Single	6	1.30	1	1.20	2	\$2.00
.60	Family group	1	2.00	-	-	-	-
.65	Single	8	1.45	1	1.30	2	2.00
.70	Single	5	1.26	3	1.20	7	1.20
.70	Family group	3	3.83	-	-	-	-
.75	Single	44	1.35	26	1.25	16	1.36
.75	Family group	22	3.84	2	1.00	1	4.00
.80	Single	-	-	13	1.42	-	-
.80	Family group	2	4.40	-	-	-	-
.90	Single	-	-	2	1.57	-	-
1.00	Single	2	1.00	5	1.10	-	-
Totals or averages	Singles	67	\$1.33	58	\$1.25	27	\$1.41
	Family groups	28	3.81	2	1.00	1	4.00

/1 Piece rates were quoted without regard to race.

/2 One female, all others male.

The evaluation of perquisites is not easy. Undoubtedly, board and lodging are of some value to the workers, but apparently wage rates are not determined with allowance for this value. In the case of daily and monthly rates, averages for those receiving living quarters were higher than for those who were not furnished a cabin. A large number of those working on piece rates were furnished houses. An earlier study of perquisites revealed that operators who gave rates with and without board allowed a differential, but averages of specific wages from farm laborers did not show this value. /3 Probably the workers whom operators want to keep are paid better and also receive more payment in kind.

Tenure of Employment

Over one-half of those interviewed were short-time employees; in fact, 55 percent had obtained their jobs in August 1936, or later (Table 12). They were hired primarily for the harvest. Fluctuations in demand

Table 12.- Date 324 present farm jobs began, Karnes County, Texas, September - October 1936

Date of beginning	Mexican		Other white		Negro	
	:Cumulative:		:Cumulative:		:Cumulative:	
	Number:	percent	Number:	percent	Number:	percent
Previous to 1930	4	1.4	-	-	-	-
1930	2	2.1	-	-	-	-
1931	-	2.1	-	-	-	-
1932	1	2.5	-	-	1	4.8
1933	1	2.8	1	5.6	-	4.8
1934	9	6.0	2	16.7	2	14.3
1935 January	3	7.0	1	22.2	3	28.6
February	1	7.4	-	22.2	-	28.6
March	1	7.7	-	22.2	-	28.6
April	-	7.7	-	22.2	-	28.6
May	-	7.7	1	27.8	-	28.6
June	1	8.1	-	27.8	-	28.6
July	1	8.4	1	33.3	-	28.6
August	5	10.2	-	33.3	-	28.6
September	4	11.6	2	44.4	-	28.6
October	6	13.7	-	44.4	-	28.6
November	15	18.9	4	66.7	2	38.1
December	9	22.1	2	77.8	4	57.1
1936 January	10	25.6	-	77.8	-	57.1
February	4	27.0	-	77.8	1	61.9
March	3	28.1	-	77.8	-	61.9
April	3	29.1	-	77.8	-	61.9
May	7	31.6	-	77.8	-	61.9
June	8	34.4	-	77.8	-	61.9
July	20	41.4	-	77.8	-	61.9
August	63	63.5	2	88.9	4	81.0
September	99	98.2	2	100.0	4	100.0
October	5	100.0	-	-	-	-

/3 Folsom, Josiah C., Perquisites and Wages of Hired Farm Laborers, U. S. Department of Agriculture Tech. Bul. 213, January 1931.

on the part of the operators of these 98 farms varied from 1.5 laborers per farm during the slack season to 19.7 at the busiest time which was generally in August. For this harvest labor 4, 5, and 6 weeks were the prevalent periods of employment reported by the operators while for crop-season work the laborer might expect 20 to 26 weeks of work. Three-fourths of the Mexicans, who had the shortest tenure, had secured their jobs since January 1936. On the other hand, more than one-half of both the other whites and Negroes were on the same job before that date. However, many of the Mexicans were croppers who worked for wages only during the harvest season.

Most of the laborers reported that in getting jobs they had sought the work themselves (Table 13). Only 2 said that their jobs had been offered to them by their employers. Some had been "told by a friend" and a few learned of the jobs through other sources. The employers most frequently gave credit for the initiative to the laborer, but 93 percent said they also frequently sought labor. In fact, the farm operators reported a greater variety of methods for bringing together employers and employees than did the laborers.

Table 13.- Method of obtaining employment, reported by 324 farm laborers, by race, Karnes County, Texas, September 1936

Method	Laborers' reports					Operators' reports	
	Total		Other				
	Num-	Per-	Mexican	white	Negro		
	ber	cent	Number	Number	Number	Number	Percent /1
Laborers' search	290	89.5	255	16	19	95	96.9
Through a friend (Employer sends another employee)	26	8.0	24	1	1	7	7.1
Through a labor agent or contract- or	3	.9	3	-	-	23	23.5
Sought by operator	2	.6	1	1	-	91	92.9
Through a relief agency	1	.3	1	-	-	12	12.2
Through an employ- ment agency	-	-	-	-	-	16	16.3
Advertised	1	.3	-	-	1	8	8.2
Answered an adver- tisement	1	.3	1	-	-	3	3.1

/1 Percent of 98 operators reporting the use of this method in 1936; since one operator may report more than one method, this column does not equal 100 percent.

Community Participation

No membership in any farmers' organization or in any labor union, agricultural or otherwise, was reported by these workers. Their participation in the life of the community came through other channels (Table 14). Trips to town for shopping and more or less frequent attendance at religious services furnished the chief means of contact. The Mexicans went shopping two or three times a month and attended church slightly more than once a month. A circus was in town at the time of the survey and most of those who were interviewed had attended. A few occasionally went to ball games. Only the "other whites" had attended any farm institute or farm-practice demonstration.

Table 14.- Informal community activity of 324 agricultural laborers, by race, Karnes County, Texas, September 1935 - September 1936

Activity	: Mexican			: Other white			: Negro		
	: Average			: Average			: Average		
	: Num-	: Per-	: times	: Num-	: Per-	: times	: Num-	: Per-	: times
	: ber	: cent	: reported	: ber	: cent	: reported	: ber	: cent	: reported
Shopping	283	99	30.8	17	94	32.1	21	100	42.3
Religious meetings	269	94	16.6	15	83	30.5	20	95	19.0
Circus	205	72	1.6	11	61	1.5	14	67	1.1
Ball games	147	52	3.3	8	44	6.0	10	48	2.5
Community entertain-ment	135	47	3.4	9	50	2.7	2	10	2.0
Movies	63	22	3.1	11	61	9.2	2	10	2.0
Overnight visits	37	13	45.1	17	94	8.9	20	95	6.4
Fishing trips	12	4	1.6	4	22	1.8	13	62	5.0

As a rule, the agricultural laborers of Karnes County are a group apart from the operator class. Sharecropping or following the crops is necessary to gain a livelihood, but neither furnishes a satisfactory level of living. Wage rates are low and employment is intermittent. A large part of the labor supply is an undeeducated Mexican group whose earnings are meager and whose opportunities for advancement are limited.

Participation in community life for these people who are racially or economically distinct from the average of the community is limited to informal groupings. Channels of protest are limited. The workers accept their lot as cotton pickers, harvest hands, or croppers in Karnes County, or they become migrants seeking to improve their lot.

